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The Presidency—Its Duties, Its Powers, Its Opportunities, and Its Limitations. By William Howard Taft. Charles Scribner's Sons. New York, 1916. 145 pp.

This volume comprises the Barbour-Page Foundation Lectures which Mr. Taft delivered at the University of Virginia, January, 1915. Like most of the author's utterances, they are marked by judicial poise, moderate conservatism, and fundamental sanity. While he points to many features of the Presidency which could be modified to advantage, he thinks that on the whole the need for changes is not extremely urgent, and that the improvements can be virtually brought about by indirect and common sense methods. For example, in dealing with the criticism that the President can do nothing toward initiating legislation except through mere recommendation, and that he is not authorized to discuss proposed laws in Congress, Mr. Taft declares that this defect is more theoretical than actual, inasmuch as the President is usually supported by a Congress of the same political faith as his own, and is therefore able to exercise considerable moral influence in shaping legislation. Opinions will naturally differ as to whether this informal process is an adequate substitute for the more direct and formal power which is exercised in the legislative body by the cabinet in European countries. It is interesting to note that Mr. Taft agrees with the pronouncement of the Democratic party in favor of a single term for the President, without, of course, calling attention to the parallel. He would have the term of the Presidency lengthened to six or seven years. Another reform which he favors is the removal from Presidential appointment of all postmasters, and collectors of internal revenues and customs, and their inclusion in the classified civil service. The book is well worth reading for its practical, brief, and yet comprehensive presentation of the most important problems connected with the office of President of the United States.

Russian Expansion on the Pacific, 1641-1850. By F. A. Golder. Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1914. Pp. 368.

No phrase can better describe the contents of this volume than the title which the author has chosen for it. It is, indeed, a story of "Russian expansion on the Pacific." A detailed account is given of the discoveries, by Russian navigators, explorers and

geographers, of the great hardships they had to undergo, and of the gradual extension of Russian influence over the many Siberian tribes. Many of these men, such as Bering, Spanberg, Waxel, Walton, Steller and Delisle de la Croyère, were not Russians; but when we reflect that Peter the Great was accustomed to surround himself with the geniuses of other nations, we are not surprised at this.

Commencing with the establishment of a Russian province at Jakutsk, in 1641, Mr. Golder, in his first chapter, describes conditions existing in eastern Siberia in the seventeenth century. We are given a brief description of the form of government and the functions of various officials, *woewods*, *golovas*, *prikaschiks*, *atamans*, etc. The chief duty of these men was to collect tribute consisting mainly of furs. There is a touch of humor, though doubtless unconscious, in the account of the thieving proclivities of the tribute gatherers.

The second chapter relates the efforts of Russia and China to secure control of the lands bordering on the Amur. Many historians, in writing of this period of Russian history, assert that in the battles with the Chinese the Russians were on all occasions greatly outnumbered. The author disputes these statements and introduces much evidence to support his contentions. He very properly notes the important part played by the Jesuit missionaries in the Treaty of Nertchinsk, which ended these struggles. In his examination of Deshnef's voyage the author endeavors to show that Muller's account is not accurate, and that Deshnef did not proceed from the Koluima to the Anaduir by water, nor was the headland mentioned by him East Cape. The fourth chapter is devoted to Russia's struggle for the possession of Kamchatka and to an account of the several voyages to the Kyril Islands; then follows a description of the confusion reigning among geographers of the time, European and Asiatic, concerning Terra de Jeso and the attempts made to solve this vexing problem.

Chapters VI, VII and VIII contain rather detailed accounts of the voyages of Bering, who to most readers is but a name, of Gwosdef, Spanberg and their contemporaries. The object of these voyages was chiefly to discover whether or not Asia and America are united. They were instituted under the patronage of Peter the Great and afterwards the Empress Catherine, and

though not successful in their principal aim, they contributed much to the geographical knowledge of the day. In reading these chapters one is struck with the thought that had there been more harmony and less jealousy among the commanders much better results would have been obtained. The author has possibly crowded too much matter into these chapters, especially in his treatment of Bering's second expedition. In our opinion the suppression of some of the details would not have materially affected the accuracy of the volume. The ships employed in these expeditions were frequently named in honor of Saints, which shows that the men, although as a rule rough and uncouth, were by no means devoid of religion. After being saved from grave dangers, invariably their first action was to return thanks to God.

The geographical relations of Asia and America were definitely established in 1823 by Wrangell. This theme is one of the subjects of the concluding chapter. In it are contained also an account of the survey of the Amur region, a task originally assigned to Bering, and the solution of the Sakhalin Island problem. The work concludes with a well merited tribute to Russian navigators. Several appendices translated from the Russian, French, and German, an index, and a bibliography complete the volume.

Mr. Golder has consulted mainly original sources found at Harvard University, the Library of Congress, the *Bibliothèque Nationale*, the *Archives de la Marine* and the archives at Petrograd, the material of which he has had to condense and present in English. The secondary sources, with which the author does not always agree, are, however, of the highest standing. In this book we see the efforts of a descriptive and narrative writer of ability, who, by his style and method of presentation sustains interest in matter that is often far from attractive. "Russian Colonization on the Pacific" is a valuable contribution to a field that, as yet, has received but scant notice.

Abraham Lincoln. The Lawyer-Statesman. By John T. Richards. Houghton Mifflin Company, 1916. Pp. vii+260.

According to the publishers, this volume "is the result of years of searching among the records of the courts before which Lincoln practised, disproves many traditions, and illumines from a new angle the life and character of the real Abraham Lincoln."